

March 10, 2017

Postal Regulatory Commission
RE: Docket Number RM2017-3
901 New York Avenue NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268-0001

Dear Commisioners:

I am writing on behalf of hundreds of charitable agencies and institutions, whom my association represents. We are the National Catholic Development Conference. Our mission is to help these institutions raise the funds necessary to support those most in need. Our members feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, rescue exploited children, heal those in crisis physically and emotionally, and clothe those who cannot clothe themselves. Our members often go where no one else will go. For us, no distance is too far or desolate, no place is too poor and no person is less important than anyone else.

All of our members use the United States Postal Service to promote their missions, educate and engage others and seek support for their ministries. Almost all of their donations are the result of a direct mail appeal. For most of our members the primary means of communication between themselves and their donors is through the postal service.

However, our budgets are very tight. For each dollar we receive, we are in most cases able to provide at least double or triple that value (\$2.00-\$3.00) in service to those in need. Even the slightest increase in mail rates can impact those whom we serve severely.

Each time postal rates increase our members have to make difficult choices. Do they continue to mail the same volume at higher rates or do they mail less in order to stay within their budgets? If they mail less, they will receive less income. If they mail at the same rate, the additional costs will result in less money available for services. Even minimal mail cost increases can impact our causes. Consider, for example, what difference will a loss of \$10,000 make in the lives of those in need? Here are just a few examples: 8,000 less meals served; 2,000 less coats to distribute; 1,000 less places in shelters. The most requested items in food pantries are diapers. There would be 75,000 less diapers to distribute. This is why the current CPI cap is so critical to our charities. Postal rates above inflation will cripple our efforts.

The USPS prides itself, and rightly so, in its commitment to continue to provide services to rural America. In rural communities, where nonperishable supplies need to be shipped longer distances, every penny is critical to keeping a food pantry or shelter open. The rural poor are often considered the invisible poor in our country. Because rural charities are more remotely located, they heavily depend on the postal service to tell their stories and seek support for their efforts. Many of them depend on the mail for their very survival and when a rural charity has to curtail services, there are often no alternatives for those most in need.

The individual members of the charitable community which our organization represents mail between 25,000-40,000,000 pieces of mail a year, including both appeals and acknowledgements. Between 85-95% of their donors who respond to these appeals still continue to send their donations to these organizations via first class mail.

The current USPS pricing system with the protection provided by the CPI cap has enabled our members to continue to use the postal service to promote their missions. However, a change to this pricing system, specifically a postage rate increase above the rate of inflation, will impact these organizations and their ability to provide services to those in need significantly. Please do not change the current system. It balances the objectives and factors required by law in a way that no replacement system could.

These are difficult times for all of us, but especially for those most vulnerable. You can empower our members to do what they do so well for so many. Continue to partner with us in our efforts. Please keep rates reasonable by maintaining the cap. Please don't make postal rates one more problem for charities that will impact those in need. Instead be part of the solution by continuing to partner with us in finding support for those least fortunate among us.

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